

**PROGRAM: OPEN HOUSES FOR STREET BOYS, GIRLS AND
ADOLESCENTS IN LIMA, PERU
1999 – 2007**

FINAL REPORT

This report is a summary of all the accomplishments and activities developed between October 1999 and September 2007 under the program “Open Houses for Street Girls, Boys and Adolescents” carried out by the Information and Education Center for the Prevention of Drug Abuse – **CEDRO**, with the support of the United States Agency for International Development – **USAID**.

The program had **three distinct stages**, which were marked by the extensions to the project. We should mention that during the program’s term, the situational context suffered several changes as the work progressed, and this forced us to redefine the actions of the intervention. The three stages of the program were: October 1999 – September 2002 (addenda to the agreement: US\$ 360,000), October 2002 – September 2004, and October 2004 – September 2007 (addenda to the agreement: US\$ 660,000).

The report explains the program’s intervention system and briefly outlines the street children problem. For the second phase it gives a brief summary of CEDRO’s proposal to confront this situation, and for the third phase we describe the objectives, activities and main results of the program (1999-2007).

1. PROGRAM CONTEXT AND INTERVENTION PROBLEM

Poverty and precariousness have hindered the social development of the country in the past years; and as always the most vulnerable population are the girls, boys and adolescents whose ages go from 0 to 17. Ever since 1999, this population group has represented approximately 40% of Peru’s total population. According to the INEI’s¹ latest estimations, there are 10,722,000 Peruvians under the age of 18.

From this number, UNICEF estimates that approximately 60% live below the poverty line; and this situation has not changed since 1999, as is demonstrated in the indices of mortality, malnutrition, illiteracy, school desertion, and family violence.

Due to these difficulties, the economic and social conditions of the population are precarious. Families are poorer, both materially and spiritually, especially those who live in the popular or marginal sectors of the city of Lima; and they have been

¹ INEI is the Spanish abbreviation for the National Institute of Statistics and Information.

forced to adopt several strategies to survive. Under this context, many families have substituted their normal standards and patterns of behavior, altering their structures and normal functioning, all of which threatens the wellbeing of the boys, girls, and adolescents who belong to these families.

The violence that exists within these families is one of the most important factors that push the children to leave their homes and live in the streets. Several studies have reported that child battering, be it physical, psychological or sexual, is a common thing in the lives of these children. We have been able to identify that most of the boys, girls, and adolescents come from economically-challenged reconstituted and dysfunctional families.

Street boys, girls, and adolescents are a serious and urgent matter that has been addressed by public and private institutions during the past 15 years. However, since 1999, the State started a gradual reduction of its coverage, limiting its work to few activities. We found that it was necessary to continue and reinforce this work and CEDRO was a good proposal based on its vast track record working for the children who live in the streets.

1.1 THE PROBLEM OF THE STREET BOYS, GIRLS, AND ADOLESCENTS

Ever since these children popped up they have been identified as children who have made the streets their home. Not only do they walk around in the streets and squares of the city during the day; they also sleep in them. All of them have broken any bonds they had with their families and have abandoned school; and they have managed to survive by practicing criminal “group” activities.

They normally organize themselves in small badly-structured groups that are permanently changing in number and members. These are violent groups, predominantly made up by males, who exert force as their means to solve their daily problems and as a power and protection mechanism.

The children and adolescents who live in the streets are totally marginalized. Their family and school links have been torn. Their main source of income is stealing and most of the money they make is used to buy drugs and inhalants (Terokal²).

² *Terokal* is the name of very strong glue.



In 1999, at a national level, there were approximately 2,000 children living in the streets. A very significant percentage lived in the streets of Lima, which determined that it should be the city where the program was developed. In the last three years, the number of children strolling through the streets of downtown Lima has diminished considerably; and that is due, primarily, to their moving to the most heavily populated districts of the city. There is no accurate data to date on how many children there are.

The aforementioned situation can be explained by two important facts: first, City Hall has been working on the recovery of the Historic Sector of downtown Lima during the past years, which has meant the cleaning and reordering of the city. And second, the economic and commercial growth in the last years of the farthest populous districts of the city –expressed in the appearance of enormous shopping malls and 24-hour entertainment centers- have made these streets much more attractive, causing the migration of the children and adolescents to these sectors.

2. BACKGROUND

In September 1983, a little 7 year-old who slept in the streets and worked during the day as a shoeshine, died electrocuted while sleeping under a bench of the San Martin Square during a rainy night. This boy, who was known simply as “Petiso”, and his tragic death revealed a situation that had been invisible until then: **the street children**. Faced with this situation, many governmental entities tried to address this problem by creating tutelary systems to protect these children. Although well intended, the methodology was not working because the children were “captured” and institutionalized against their will. In the end, they would escape these institutions to return to the street.

In 1989, CEDRO started a program for boys, girls and adolescents in difficult situations who lived in high risk sectors (extreme poverty, drug consumption and commercialization). Parallel to the field work, CEDRO undertook an investigation

that found that the “street kids” were exposed to higher risks. The research demonstrated that:

This is a population that is economically poor; although it is not poverty itself that brings about the expulsion of the child from its home. The main factor for the expulsion is the physical and psychological abuse; which normally occurs in reconstituted homes. The city of Lima displayed the largest proportion of boys, girls, and adolescents who lived in the streets (approximately 1,200).

Based on the poorly successful experiences applied thus far, CEDRO began its work with the children creating the Program of Open Houses for boys, girls, and adolescents who lived in the street in order to shelter and rescue them from the social risks. The big difference between this experience and the previous ones was fundamentally that the children were not forced to move into the houses, but rather through an arduous work in the streets with the children, they were convinced to accept trading the streets for a place where they would receive the protection they deserved. It is called “open” because they decide, voluntarily, when they go and when they leave; they simply need to ask and no one will hold them against their will. It is “open” because it teaches the children to coexist with their existing environment; they attend schools located close to the shelter homes, and they can go out and play with other children in the neighborhood.

So, during the first years of the program, we managed to open five fully-functional shelter homes. As of 1999, the program held only 3: one house for boys in the district of La Victoria, with a capacity for 24 children and adolescents; another house for boys in the district of Rimac, also for 24 boys; and the third house is only for girls, with a capacity for 24. These three houses are still functioning today.

We should mention that none of these houses are property of CEDRO, and the reason for this is that we are trying to reinforce the principle that it is the community who should participate and be responsible for the children at risk. The two houses for boys have been built in land that belongs to the State; and the girls’ house belongs to the Lima’s Welfare Institute, who has assigned its use for that purpose.



The correct and effective functioning of the houses requires the participation of many actors. During these past years we have made many important allies, like the National Nourishment Assistance Program (PRONAA³), who kindly donate food for the children; the Children and Adolescents' Hospital provides medical attention, which is partially gratuitous; we have secured the children's and adolescents' access to public schools; there is educational support from the ADRA-PERU Agreement. We also have the support of INPPARES⁴ for medical and lab exams. Finally we are constantly receiving donations in clothes and toys from several private groups.

3. PROGRAM METHODOLOGY OR STRATEGY

The Program's strategy is to develop a system of Open Houses where the boys, girls, and adolescents who live in the street are welcome to stay. They enter the program on their own free will and they are never forced to remain in the house. The program provides them with the love, understanding, follow-up, education and spiritual growth they need. As a result, their self-esteem is boosted because the main objective of the program is to ensure the children's and adolescent's reinsertion into society (family reinsertion or job placement).

The capacity of the houses is limited because a larger population would not allow the personalized care we wish to provide to the kids, and it would not be possible to achieve the results expected under this methodology.

³ PRONAA in Spanish means Programa Nacional de Asistencia Alimentaria.

⁴ INPPARES is the Spanish abbreviation of Peruvian Institute for Responsible Parenthood.

4. STAGES OF THE PROGRAM

The program proposes three stages that go from the recruitment work in the streets, to the adaptation and integration of the child in the house, and finally their family reinsertion or economic independence. These stages are the three central lines of action of the program, and each stage has its own activities to ensure that the boys, girls, and adolescents finally achieve their recovery.

Stage 1: **Recruitment work in the streets** – the objective is to convince the kids to leave the street and enter the program voluntarily. During this phase, most of the work is performed in the streets, where project staff establishes a permanent relationship of trust with the child and/or adolescent.



Stage 2: **Integration and growth** – the main objective during this stage is to provide accommodation for the beneficiaries and to teach them norms, values and healthy attitudes. This stage establishes a structure for coexistence that implies roles, responsibilities and rules in the house. The Program provides the children and adolescents with housing, food, education, medical assistance, occupational training, etc.



Stage 3: **Social reinsertion** – the aim is to reinsert the boys, girls, and adolescents into their original families or foster families; and if this is not possible, to help them achieve their economic independence when they reach legal age (18) by providing them with the necessary skills and abilities to face the work market.



5. OBJECTIVES AND TARGET POPULATION

The main objective of the Program is to achieve the integral recovery of the boys, girls, and adolescents who live in the street and are victims of family violence, in order to ensure their social reinsertion, be it into their family of origin or by becoming economically independent when they reach legal age.

5.1 OBJECTIVES FULFILLED

The program has accomplished the family reinsertion and/or the economic independence of boys, girls, and adolescents who used to live in the streets

through the development of a comprehensive program that systematized a singular methodology for this population, including working in the streets so as to reduce drug consumption and other anti-social behaviors among the children and adolescents. In order to achieve this goal, the following specific objectives were established:

1. The recruitment of close to 200 children and adolescents who live in the street into the Open Houses Program in order to reinsert them into their original families or helping them become economically-independent members of our society.
2. To reduce significantly, among the target population, the use and abuse of drugs.
3. To improve school attendance among the program's children and adolescents.
4. To develop working skills among the children and adolescents of the program.

**RESULTS OF THE PROGRAM: OPEN HOUSES FOR STREET BOYS, GIRLS AND ADOLESCENTS
1999-2007**

Program Results	Project Periods (1999-2007)			Total	
	1999 – 2002	2002 – 2004	2004 – 2007	N	%
Beneficiaries served by the Program through the provision of housing, clothing, feeding, medical, educational and psychological services.	176	187	156	579	100.0
Children accepted into the Program through referrals from various institutions.	62	129	110	361	62.4
Children incorporated into the Program exclusively through the recruitment work in the streets.	114	58	46	218	37.6
Children reinserted into the educational system: registration, permanent attendance, and culmination of school year.	105	112	93	310	53.5
Children and adolescents who have totally quit using drugs.	176	187	156	579	100.0

Program Results	Project Periods (1999-2007)			Total	
	1999 – 2002	2002 – 2004	2004 – 2007	N	%
Children and adolescents are trained in different occupations and trades.	116	67	51	234	40.4
Children and adolescents reinserted into their families.	70	37	62	169	29.1
Adolescents begin a new independent life.	35	28	23	86	14.8
Children and adolescents who receive a job opportunity.	49	48	43	140	50.1
Children and adolescents that deserted the program.	15	16	15	46	7.9
Prevention nuclei formed in different districts of Lima and whose members have been trained in the prevention of family violence.			10	10	
Violence prevention promoters trained and actually working.			300	300	

6. MAIN ACTIVITIES DEVELOPED

6.1 WORK IN THE STREETS

- The team of street educators was strengthened with volunteers and interns from different universities to reinforce the work of recruiting children and adolescents from the streets.
- During the duration of this stage, different educational and recreational activities were developed three times a week as a form to approach the children and adolescents in the streets. The purpose of these activities was to develop and consolidate the personal bonds created with these children in order to persuade them and motivate them to join the Program's Open Houses.



- The Program actively participated in the formation of a Network of Street Educators - REDENAC⁵, which includes the participation of many NGOs, other entities that work in the field, and INABIF⁶, who acts as the representative of the State in this problem. The aim of this network is to reinforce the street work developed thus far so that we can all work in a comprehensive and coordinated fashion to serve the children and adolescents that live in the streets.
- The admittance of street children and adolescents into Program Houses is still a permanent activity.

6.2 MEETING THE BASIC NEEDS OF THE CHILDREN AND ADOLESCENTS

⁵ In Spanish, REDENAC stands for Red de Educadores de Calle.

⁶ INABIF is the Spanish abbreviation for the National Institute for Family Welfare.

- Meals were provided to all the boys, girls, and adolescents who live in the Program's Open Houses through the kitchens managed by the different DISAS⁷. They only covered lunch.
- Nightly and weekend commissions were formed to motivate the Program's beneficiaries to prepare their own meals with the supervision of the educators.



- Medical exams were performed on all the children and adolescents admitted into the houses for the early detection and treatment of diseases.
- Medical care was provided to those beneficiaries who were diagnosed with different pathologies. Care was provided by different health establishments, but mainly by the Children's Hospital.
- Psychological care and counseling was provided for cases of inhalant consumption and addiction, sexual abuse, and behavioral changes. Psychological support was also provided to help the children and adolescents in their educational and social reinsertion.

⁷ DISAS is the Spanish abbreviation for Lima's Health Bureaus.



6.3 FORMAL AND NON-FORMAL EDUCATION

- We identified a series of educational institutions that would accept the children and adolescents living in the shelter homes.
- Leveling and reinforcement workshops were provided to the beneficiaries before they returned to school and also while attending school. These workshops were developed by volunteers and the educators.



- Follow-up visits were made to the schools, meeting with teachers, principals and parents. These activities were handled by social workers and in certain occasions by the educators.
- The program carried out different workshops on skills for life, values, moral growth, among others. These workshops were developed by the educators, and the objective was to strengthen the recovery and

the social reinsertion of the boys, girls, and adolescents; and to help the beneficiaries design a project of life while living in the houses and for when they leave it.

7. OCCUPATIONAL TRAINING

- Various vocational orientation workshops were carried out with those adolescents who were approaching the culmination of their participation in the program. These workshops were in charge of the Program's psychological unit.
- Selection of the adolescents that would benefit from the training courses in different educational centers. Technical courses were provided on: cosmetology, shoemaking, computers, bakery, handicrafts, pottery and ceramics, international cooking, gardening.



- The Program explored different businesses and small stores where it could place the adolescents from the shelter homes. The beneficiaries worked efficiently and responsibly in the following trades: sales, mechanics, bakery assistants, shoemaking, Tae Kwon Do instructors, and kitchen helpers, among others.
- The social workers followed-up the beneficiaries at the training centers and at their work places.
- The Program has developed workshops on personal growth with emphasis on certain attitudes and values like responsibility, respect, and how to save money. The aim was to provide the adolescents with some stability in their jobs and teach them how to manage their income.

- Many individuals and institutions have revealed their sympathetic spirits by donating money to cover the educational expenses of the boys, girls, and adolescents who live in the Open Houses.



8. FAMILY REINSERTION

- Sensitization workshops were carried out with the families of the Program's beneficiaries, in order to motivate them to participate in a worthy task that, in turn, resulted in the reinsertion of the children and adolescents into their families.
- The boys, girls, and adolescents participated in workshops on values, self-esteem, decision taking, life projects, and sexuality.
- The workshops for parents dealt with the following topics: family violence, the role of the parents, guidelines on upbringing and communication.



- Home visits were made to contact the families of the Program's beneficiaries in order to achieve their reinsertion.

9. DIFFICULTIES

During all these years, the main problem has been achieving self-sustainability. Due to the nature of the Program, this sustainability is not easy to accomplish because the costs involved are rather high and no single self-managed activity is capable of covering all the needs of the shelter homes.

Nonetheless, the project has developed the capacity to sustain a large proportion of the essential components of the integral services provided to the children: health, food and education, all of which are possible thanks to the support of strategic partners who cover some of these services. We believe we have come a long way in achieving the sustainability of the program; however, it still needs financial support to ensure the culmination of certain processes, like the establishment of the networks and social marketing of the program without distracting the resources from the main task of the program: the comprehensive attention of the street boys, girls, and adolescents.

10. MOST RELEVANT RESULTS

- During the entire term of the program, we have served a total of 579 boys, girls, and adolescents. Of these, 64% (370) were recruited directly from the streets, and 36% (209) were admitted into the program through referrals from other institutions working in surrounding districts.

- Sixty-four percent (64%) of the children and adolescents that participate in the program have definitely left the streets and have initiated their recovery in the shelter homes.
- 33.8% of the population served has been successfully reinserted into their original families, and 10% have achieved an independent life.
- The program has achieved a 100% drug consumption abstinence among its population; and 70% participated in individual counseling sessions demonstrating significant advances in this recovery processes.
- Sixty percent (60%) of the population served has attended school, finished the school year and passed on to the next grade.
- 28% of the population served received at least one job opportunity from businesses or small stores, holding on to their jobs while still in the Program.
- Five percent (5%) of the program's total population has permanently attended a training center and has displayed interest in its studies.